

Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Issue: Promoting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was established on the 8th of December 1949 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 302 (IV), is a humanitarian-oriented organization that was formed as a result of the refugee crisis following the Arab-Israeli conflict. As of 2020, the UNRWA has assisted more than 5,3 million refugees and operates in 5 fields: Jordan, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The region has been facing a historically hectic political background, including the conflicts between the Arab forces and Palestine, which resulted in a gradual increase in refugee populations. The consequent refugee crises led to emergent needs for assistance and aid that the organization strived to cover. Hence, the mandate on which the program of the UNRWA is focused mostly concerns humanitarian life-sustaining work, such as education, healthcare, social services, infrastructure and finance. However, due to the increasing pressure, the mandate has been continuously extended, until a solution to the political status is found.

Despite UNRWA's role, its effectiveness is highly doubted. The growing emergency of humanitarian needs in the region, the increasing number of refugees and the lack of funding, when accompanied with major problems found in accessing the organization and its assistance, pose barriers to the sufficiency and efficiency of the organization. The importance of resolving this issue should not be underestimated, due to the fact that the Near East's future is heavily dependent on the work of the UNRWA. If the effectiveness and the efficiency of the organization diminishes, thousands will be left unassisted, without fulfilling their needs and rights, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition to that, being in a decade, which strives to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, as established by the UN, safeguarding the living conditions of people in that huge area is needed. Thus, bolstering the positive influence of the UNRWA in the humanitarian crisis of Palestine and the surrounding region is of vital importance.

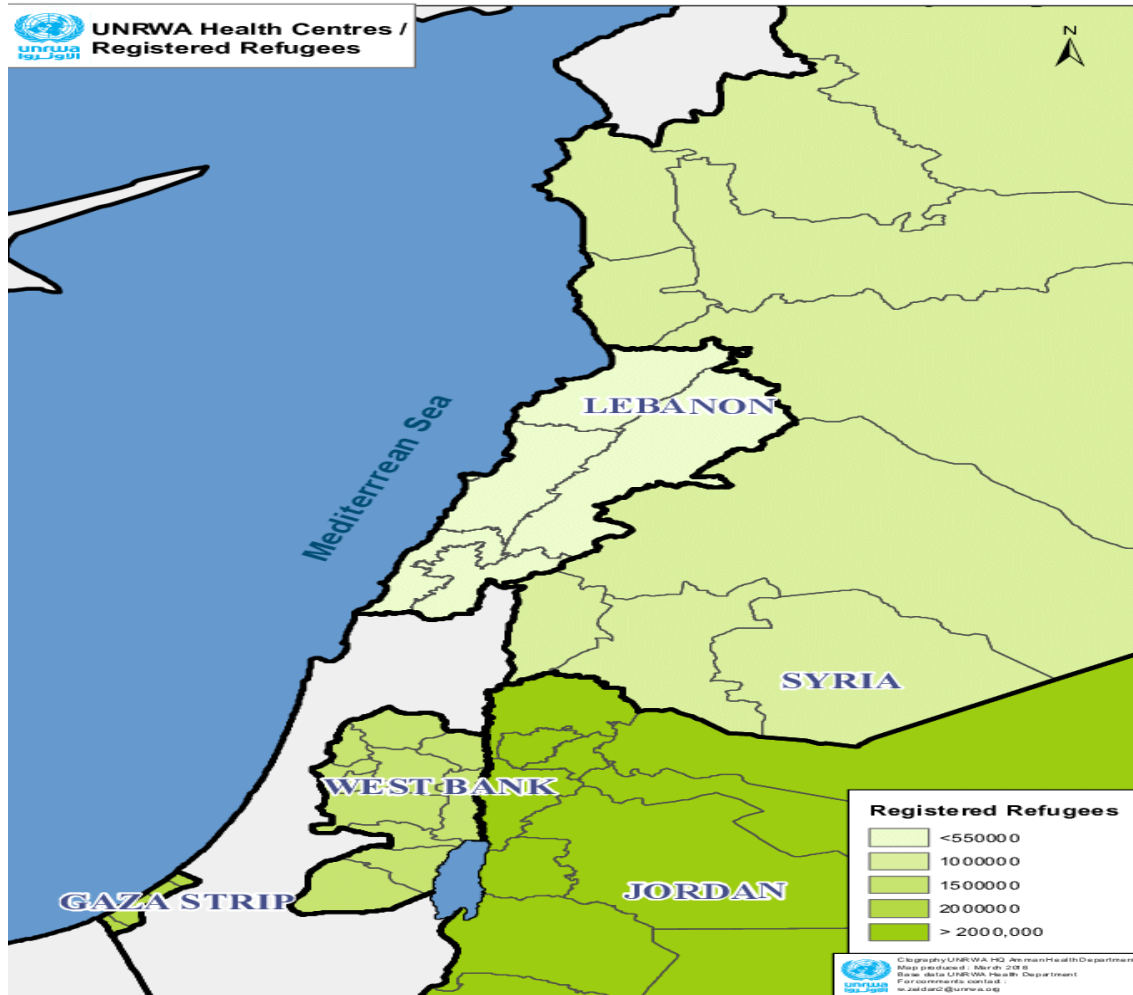


Figure 1: The 5 operation territories of the UNRWA¹

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Refugee

Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.²

¹<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Akihiro-Seita/publication/333245649/figure/fig1/AS:761018355564544@1558452323880/Distribution-of-UNRWA-registered-populations-in-the-five-fields-of-operations.png>

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "What Is a Refugee?" *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>.

Mandate

Mandate is an authoritative command, an authorization to act.³

Centralization

Centralization refers to the process in which activities involving planning and decision-making within an organization are concentrated to a specific leader or location. In a centralized organization, the decision-making powers are retained in the head office, and all other offices receive commands from the main office. The executives and specialists who make critical decisions are based in the head office.⁴

Near East

Near East is an indefinite geographical or regional term, usually referring to the countries of southwestern Asia, including Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia and the other nations of Arabia.⁵

Nakbah

Palestinians refer to it as “Nakbah”, which literally translates as “The Catastrophe”. It refers to the mass exodus of at least 750,000 Arabs from Palestine.⁶

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally displaced person, a person who has been forced to move within their own country as a result of conflict or environmental disaster.⁷

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO is an organization founded in 1964 with the aim of creating a state for Palestinians; it recognized the state of Israel in 1993 and Israel granted Palestinians autonomy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.⁸

Microcredit

Microcredit is a common form of microfinance that involves an extremely small loan given to an individual to help them become self-employed or grow a small business. These borrowers tend

³ “Mandate Definition & Meaning.” *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mandate>.

⁴ “Centralization.” *Corporate Finance Institute*, 25 Jan. 2022, <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/strategy/centralization/>.

⁵ “Near East Definition & Meaning.” *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/near-east>.

⁶ Jazeera, Al. “Al Nakba - Palestineremix.” *Al Nakba: the History of Palestine since 1799 - Palestine Remix*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/al-nakba.html#/17>.

⁷ “IDP: Meaning & Definition for UK English.” *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Lexico Dictionaries, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/idp>.

⁸ “PLO Definition and Meaning: Collins English Dictionary.” *PLO Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary*, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/plo>.

to be low-income individuals, especially from less developed countries (LDCs). Microcredit is also known as "microlending" or "microloan."⁹

Quran

The Islamic holy book, considered to be God's message for mankind as revealed to Muhammad.¹⁰

Liberation

Liberation is the act or process of freeing someone or something from another's control.¹¹

Independence

Independence is the state of being free of the control of some other person, country or entity. Revolutions are all about obtaining independence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

Israeli War of Independence and the Palestine Nakbah

On the 29th of November 1947, Palestine was partitioned into Arab and Jewish states through UN Resolution 181, due to the fact that Britain, who had sole control over the region, couldn't find a solution on how to stop violence between Jews and Arabs. However, this partition noted the beginning of a dark historic period both for Israel and for Palestine. Following this action, the separated Jews and Arabs began participating in a long-winded dispute, which deteriorated even more on the 15th of May 1948, when the then-present British troops withdrew from the region. This withdrawal was a consequence of Britain's exhaustion from World War II and the drain from constantly trying to separate Jews and Arabs, so as not for any conflict to occur. A prime example of the turpitude of the situation is the attack in village Dayr Yāsīn on the 9th of April 1948, where 130 fighters from 2 Zionist paramilitary groups killed more than 100 Palestinian Arabs, including women and children, while the said village roughly had a population of 600.

On this note, one day prior to the withdrawal of the British troops, on the 14th of May 1948, Israel declared its independence, which was the then region that belonged to the Jews. Consequently, Arab forces from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon

⁹ Hayes, Adam. "Microcredit." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 19 Aug. 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/microcredit.asp>.

¹⁰ "Definitions for Quranquran." *What Does Quran Mean?*, <https://www.definitions.net/definition/quran>.

¹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/liberation>.

operated in southern and eastern Palestine, which were not Jewish property. This invasion aimed to “restore law”, mostly following the Muslim stereotype and the orders of the Quran, due to the belief that the long-term British occupation, had corrupted Islamist morals in governance. In order to recuperate, Israel took over Jerusalem (Palestine’s capital) and managed to repulse the mass Arab attacks by the aforementioned 5 states, and reached to take over the territory up to the Egypt-Palestine frontier, except for the Gaza Strip. In order to ameliorate the ongoing conflict, Israel made separate agreements with each of the 5 Arab forces that were part of the invasion. This action was also a way of Israel trying to revive relations with other states, due to the fact that new discoveries in natural resources were made. Part of the 5 agreements was the creation of temporary frontiers between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. From Israel’s perspective, this period is known as the Israel war of Independence, since it was an indication of the power Israel could gain in the Arab World. On the other hand, the Arab World views this as Nakbah, which means Catastrophe in Arabic, due to the gigantic numbers of refugees, displaced persons and IDPs it led to.

The Six-Day War

Following the loss of Israel in the Suez Canal crisis, Syria as 1 of the 5 Arab forces had been bombarding Israeli villages in the Golan Heights for years, which is vaguely in the Levant region. This situation worsened during early 1967 and as a response, in April of 1967, Israel shot down 6 Syrian fighter jets and then Egypt mobilized the Egyptian forces in the Egypt-Israeli border (Sinai border), which destroyed the local UN peacekeeping forces. On the 8th of June 1967, Egypt signed a defense pact with Jordan, in order to be prepared for the escalation of the conflict between Syria and Israel. The same pact was joined by Syria the next day. 2 months later Israel launched an air assault on Egypt, which destroyed Egypt’s air force. This alarmed the victory of Israel, which followed a series of eventful actions: Israeli units drove back Syrian forces from the Golan Heights, took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and drove Jordanian forces from the West Bank. With that being said, Israel had sole and utter control over Jerusalem, which is Palestine’s capital. As a consequence, Israel slowly started gaining control over Palestine’s governance, governing style, and military action.

The Lebanon War

On the 5th of June 1982 the Israeli bombing of Beirut and southern Lebanon took place, following rising tensions between Israel and Palestine, due to Israel’s withdrawal from the Egyptian-Israeli borders 1.5 months prior to the bombing. The involvement of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is vast during this war. PLO is considered the predecessor of the UNRWA and was conceived in an Arab League summit in Cairo in 1964.

Its goal was to liberate and self-determine Palestine, following the Palestinian Nakbah and the Suez Crisis. In addition to that, having noted the displacement these crises caused, the PLO managed to ensure that refugees will be repatriated. The PLO had strongholds in the region of the bombing, which indicates the contradiction of the PLO's involvement with Israeli interests, which led to them bombing the region, where the PLO was active. On the 14th of June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, in the scope of pushing the PLO away from the Israel-Lebanon border. However, negotiations with the PLO shortly followed and the Israeli forces were withdrawn from Lebanon by June 1985. This caused religious contradiction within the country, leading to political deadlock, on how to resolve the religious dispute.

Conclusion

As noticed by the aforementioned historical events, Palestine was not directly involved in many of the conflicts, wars or disputes. However, Palestine was harmed by all atrocities, mostly due to its location. Such instances are the Second Lebanon War and the Suez Canal crisis. These disputes between Arab states, resulted in mass influx of refugees, migrants and immigrants in the Arab territory, which is what the UNRWA is putting effort in assisting. In addition to that, Israel throughout the decades managed to intervene in Palestine internally. Furthermore, the Arab forces were more involved and hence many persons from the said region were displaced within Palestine or many people from Palestine were displaced within the Arab territory.

Ongoing situation in Palestine

As of now, Palestine has a population of approximately 4,803 million and a GDP of 27 billion US \$. The UN, though, estimates that another 1,5 million Palestinian refugees are displaced on an international level. The political situation seems to be improved, due to the involvement of the UNRWA and the external assistance by UN member states. However, Israel is still intervening in Palestine, as some Israeli populations and army groups are posing violence, expressed through attacks, protesting, shootings, terrorist episodes etc. These hostilities, lead to the decrease of the living status, deeming it as not able to live under. Not only does it pose risk to the health of the citizens, but it also affects access to electricity, water, natural resources etc. Furthermore, corruption in institutions is a convicted phenomenon, which makes it impossible for such phenomenon to be legally confronted, or reported. In addition, infrastructure is destroyed through such atrocities, which harms shelter, education etc. Lastly, the healthcare system is not able to handle the constant and mass incidents of attacks, due to the fact that it is already weakened.

The relations of states with Palestine have also been altered through time. Palestine has received much assistance, especially financially, by the US and the European world, as well as the EU itself. These countries are considered to be its allies, even though may suspect that other interests are hidden through this befriending behavior and policy. In contradiction to that, Russia shifted its stance towards Palestine. Dating back, Russia didn't use to be supportive, but now, due to the complexity of Israel-Russia relations, Russia expressed its friendly behaviour towards Palestine. In addition to that, China is said to have a neutral stance towards Palestine, but due to the diplomacy between China and Israel, the neutrality towards Palestine is considered to aim for exploitation, such as natural resources and political manipulation.

The history of the UNRWA

Due to the eventful history of Palestine and its surrounding region, the presence of an organization to assist in the humanitarian security and protection of the region and its population was needed. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) formed the UNRWA on the 8th of December 1949 through resolution 302 (IV), mostly to combat the consequences of the Arab-Israeli War. The organization began operation on the 1st of May 1950, starting off as a temporary organization. Thus, given the instability and the varying needs of the region in question, the organization's mandate has been and still is often renewed, in an attempt to effectively protect the humanitarian well-being of Palestinian refugees or the Palestinian population in general.

However, the UNRWA wasn't the first attempt of the UN to ameliorate the situation in Palestine and the broader region. Prior to the formation of the UNRWA, the UN Relief for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was only responsible for the assistance and aid of the refugees in Palestine. The organization, which was formed in 1942, was deemed ineffective, since it lacked access to detecting and monitoring refugees within the region. Moreover, the historic events that followed hindered the organization from being useful and hence the UNRWA was formed, post-Arab-Israeli War. The UN Relief for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had a similar humanitarian mandate, however, it lacked an effective way of operation, due to a lack of personnel, monitors, mechanisms, etc. As a result, the UNRWA, which was created a few years later, was strengthened, by addressing this insufficiency.

The involvement of UN Member States in the work of the UNRWA is major. The UNRWA operates solely through funding opportunities provided by affiliated countries to the issue. Its biggest donor was and remains to be the United States, which in April of 2021 donated 150 million\$ in response to the difficult humanitarian conditions that followed the military confrontation between the resistance factions in Gaza and Israel. Furthermore, many countries

have provided the organization with external assessments, reflecting on its effectiveness, such as the Swedish assessment. Nations have also provided the organization with assistance on detecting mechanisms, placing and bolstering some of them in the region of the Near East. That being the reason, the cooperation of the countries with the organization is essential towards creating cooperation and functioning patterns.

The organization's mandate & action

Due to the fact that the UNRWA was drafted to be a temporary organization, its mandate is not clear or defined. The organization derives its mandate from the UNGA, and despite having no clear definition in documentation, it is mainly indicated through relevant UNGA resolutions. Thus, based on the initial reaction to the 1947 atrocities as well as the hostilities that followed, the mandate is proactively extended every 3 years in order to fulfill the current and future humanitarian needs of the region. The mandate is to be renewed on the 30th of June 2023, as agreed by the UNGA in 2021.

In general, the organization doesn't aim to resolve the political disputes internally or externally but primarily to provide humanitarian assistance and aid to those who need it, until the situation is resolved. Hence, it strongly follows a humanitarian and development-oriented mandate, in order to provide assistance, while refugees are waiting for a lasting and radical solution. As a result, it doesn't intervene in political negotiations at all, which is considered both an advantage and disadvantage of the organization. On the one hand, it solely provides the needed services to assist humanitarian the Palestinian population, while other carriers - like negotiations - cater for the political resolution of the topic. On the other hand, it both assists and hinders attempts to tackle the issue holistically, since it only focuses on humanitarian aid and does not provide any solid political contribution. So, the way the mandate of the UNRWA was formed and is expanded is a double-edged sword, since on the one hand it provides sufficient humanitarian assistance, which is much needed in the region, but it totally neglects other aspects of the issue and as a result, it doesn't provide a political resolution.

Hence, the action focuses on the following facets: education, primary health care, mental health care, relief and social services, microcredit, emergency assistance. The organization has infrastructure in all 5 operational territories, but mainly controls actions taken in East Jerusalem. Such actions include building schools, hospitals, access to social services and mental health support, financial assistance etc. In order to complete all of these initiatives, the UNRWA cooperates with many UN-family organizations, like the WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, due to the similarity of their mandates.

The barriers of the UNRWA

Despite the organization's effectiveness in contributing to the development and rehabilitation of Palestine, the factors that hinder the UNRWA in fulfilling its goal vary.

Dependent function of the Palestinian refugees

Due to the fact that the UNRWA is not politically involved in Palestine, the country lacks a political resolution. It is also worth mentioning that Palestine is an observer state in the UN and hence the UN can't intervene politically. This means that the UN can't intervene politically, as a means to resolve the interior political crisis, which worsens the situation even more. With that said, the organization's function is to help the refugees up until the political situation is stabilized, which doesn't seem close, since no organization, carrier, or nation contributes to that. As a result, Palestinians have become dependent on the work of the UNRWA since it temporarily covers their needs. Theoretically, if the UNRWA suddenly ceased to exist, millions would be left with no help leading to death or fleeing to a region outside the Near East. Concluding, the UNRWA is the only string that the Palestinian people can hang from.

Solid focus on humanitarian relief

Dating back to its formation, the UNRWA has renewed its mandate several times through UNGA resolutions, but it has never considered being politically involved in the region. However, this lack of a political character is a double-sided coin. On the one hand, the organization focuses on the humanitarian aspect solely and thus improving it. On the other hand, there is no other carrier to provide a political solution.

Lack of funding

The UNRWA funding has traditionally been sourced through the voluntary contributions of UN member states. The U.S. was formerly the biggest contributor to UNRWA. In 2016, the U.S. donated USD 368 million, about a third of the 2016 annual Project Budget. In August 2018, however, US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley confirmed that the U.S. State Department would be ending all contributions to UNRWA, reversing a policy held constant by U.S. administrations for the past 70 years.¹² After these 3 years of decline in funding and donations, the US, seeing the Israel-Palestine recent conflict, it decided to contribute to the cause of the organization once again. In 2021, the United States of America was the largest donor with a total contribution of over US\$ 338 million across all UNRWA funding portals, followed by Germany (over US\$ 176 million). These contributions made up about 46 percent of the total contributions UNRWA

¹² Abbyhershberger. "The History and Future of UNRWA." *Mennonite Central Committee Canada*, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 3 Dec. 2018, <https://mcccanada.ca/stories/history-future-unrwa-0>.

received from government donors and the European Union (EU).¹³ The contribution of countries and unions makes up about 93% of the organization's funds. Alongside the countries and unions that financially support the UNRWA, many "UN-sister agencies" share projects to benefit the Palestine refugees, which improve the system, in order to improve emergency response and systems. For 2021, these collaborations valued 15 million US \$. Furthermore, businesses, corporations, international NGOs, community-based organizations and foundations contribute a respectable amount to the work of the UNRWA. Despite the variety of carriers that provide funds to the organization, it has still undergone a financial crisis, leading to diminishing quality, efficiency and sufficiency of the systems and mechanisms that the organization is responsible for.

OUR TOP GOVERNMENT DONORS FOR 2021



Figure 2: The largest donors to the UNRWA for 2021¹⁴

Inequitable infrastructure and inefficient mechanisms

Stemming from the lack of funding to some extent, the UNRWA is not properly functioning. The infrastructure that the organization provides is not adequate or proper, for example hospitals and schools, and doesn't fulfill the needs of the residents. Thus, new dangers arise, like epidemics, due to lack of sanitation for instance. Another barrier is that these infrastructures are centralised and hence access to them is limited. Apart from all infrastructure, the organization's governance and the different mechanisms are centralized in the Near East as well. For instance, mechanisms that detect refugees and

¹³ "How Is UNRWA Funded?" UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/how-unrwa-funded#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20the%20United%20States,from%20government%20donors%20and%20EU>.

¹⁴ Ibid

immigrants are placed in central locations, leading to thousands or millions being displaced without notice. This situation, of course, hinders the organization from serving its purpose.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Israel

Israel, as the main opponent of Palestine, is against the work of the UNRWA, since it opposes its interests. As also proven by the Lebanon War, Israel initiated to destroy the PLO, which was the corresponding organization to today's UNRWA. Despite that, the UNRWA, as a solely humanitarian organization, has kept a neutral stance towards Israel, since that would hinder the purpose of the organization. Bearing that in mind, if the organization were to shift its mandate to include the political aspect, it would still have to keep a neutral stance, as well as establish penalties for organizations that with any hostilities aim to pose barriers to actions. If these measures are not followed, the organization might be subject to harm, corruption, and ineffectiveness, since Israel would intervene.

United States of America (USA)

The US is one of the biggest financial contributors to the UNRWA. The overall UNRWA budget for 2021 and 2022 is US \$1.5 billion and US \$1.6 billion, respectively, and even with the generous support of the United States announced Friday, interruptions and decreases in funding from major donors, including regional donors, still leave an expected funding shortfall above US\$ 100 million in 2022.¹⁵ Despite the decrease of the US funds in 2013-2015, in later years, the UNRWA has been even more appealing and attractive towards the US funds. The 2021-2022 Framework for Cooperation with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was signed on July 14 by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration of the United States Department of State (UNRWA). Through increased accountability, transparency, and compliance with UN principles, including impartiality, the Framework includes a number of specific promises to improve the Agency's capacity to provide effective and efficient aid to Palestinian refugees.

Sweden

Sweden is a prime example of a European country that has supported the work of the UNRWA in many facets. Except for the fact that for 2021, Sweden was the 4th largest funding

¹⁵ "US Contributions to UNRWA in 2021-2022 Are Key to Agency's Ability to Operate - Occupied Palestinian Territory." *ReliefWeb*, 19 July 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/us-contributions-unrwa-2021-2022-are-key-agencys-ability-operate>.

donor towards the UNRWA, in 2010 it had also released the Swedish assessment of multilateral organizations, where it also reflected on the UNRWA. It reflected upon the following sections: Mandate and direction of operations, Governance, Organization and Swedish participation, Financial information, Relevance, Internal effectiveness, External effectiveness, Trends. Due to the developed systems Sweden has internally, it has also assisted the organization in robusting its detecting mechanisms.

European Union (EU)

Since 1971, when the EU and the UNRWA started their collaboration, the 2 organizations have shared their common goal; to assist the Palestinian refugees in the Near East, due to the similarity of mandates, since they are both humanitarian. During all these periods, the EU and its member states have proven to be some of the most valuable contributors to the organization, mostly due to funding. In 2021, the EU signed a Joint Declaration in support of UNRWA for the period 2021-2024, marking 50 years of partnership. In the Joint Declaration, the EU commits to continue supporting UNRWA politically and in securing predictable, multi-annual financial resources to enable the Agency to fulfill its mandate and provide its essential services to Palestinian refugees.¹⁶

International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO)

The International Islamic Charity Organization IICO has contributed US\$ 500,000 to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to provide emergency cash assistance to Palestine refugees in Gaza. In 2020, the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) partnered with UNRWA with the aim of assisting in providing primary healthcare to Palestine refugees in Gaza. The contribution enabled the Agency to purchase essential antenatal screening and laboratory equipment for all 22 UNRWA healthcare centres in the enclave. In 2019, UNRWA healthcare centres in the Gaza Strip registered more than 8 million patient consultations across its 22 healthcare centres. IICO is a humanitarian organization that provides much-needed aid to the most vulnerable.¹⁷ This is of vast importance,

¹⁶ "The European Union Announces EUR 246 Million Three-Year Contribution in Support of UNRWA and Palestine Refugees." *UNRWA*, 13 May 2022, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/european-union-announces-eur-246-million-three-year-contribution-support>.

¹⁷ "The International Islamic Charity Organization Contributes US\$ 500,000 to Provide Emergency Cash Assistance to Palestine Refugees in Gaza." *UNRWA*, 13 Apr. 2022, www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/international-islamic-charity-organization-contributes-us-500000-provide#:~:text=The%20International%20Islamic%20Charity%20Organization%20IICO%20has%20contributed%20US%24%20500%2C000,to%20Palestine%20refugees%20in%20Gaza.

bearing in mind that the outnumbering majority of the population in the 5 fields of operation are Muslims.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
29 November 1947	The UN adopts resolution 181, through which Palestine is partitioned Arab and Jewish states.
9 April 1948	There is an attack in village Dayr Yāsīn, where 130 fighters from 2 Zionist paramilitary groups killed more than 100 Palestinian Arabs
14 May 1948	Israel declares independence
15 May 1948	The British troops withdraw from the Palestinian territory
8 December 1949	The UNRWA is established through UNGA resolution 302 (IV)
26 July 1956	The Egyptian President nationalizes the Suez Canal.
29 October 1956	Israeli forces invade Egypt through the Suez Canal, which had been previously nationalized, meaning the beginning of the Suez Crisis
28 May 1964	The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed, in the scope for the formation of an official Palestinian state
April 1967	Israel shot down 6 Syrian fighter jets and then Egypt mobilized the Egyptian forces in the Egypt-Israeli border (Sinai border), which destroyed the local UN peacekeeping forces.

5 June 1967	The Six-Day War begins
8 June 1967	Egypt signs a defense pact with Jordan and Syria
10 June 1967	The Six-Day War ends with Israel's victory
August 1967	Israel launches an air assault on Egypt, which destroys Egypt's air force.
1971	The EU and the UNRWA start their collaboration.
26 April 1982	Israel troops withdraw from the Egyptian-Israeli borders.
5 June 1982	The Israeli bombing of Beirut and southern Lebanon take place
14 June 1982	Israel invades Lebanon reaching the outskirts of Beirut
June 1985	Negotiations with the PLO are carried out and the Israeli forces are withdrawn from Lebanon.
12 July 2006	Hezbollah, which is a Lebanese Shia (Islamist branch) military group and political party, launched an operation against Israel in an attempt to pressure the country into releasing Lebanese prisoners, which were captured during the Lebanon War.
14 August 2006	A United Nations-brokered ceasefire enters into effect and the Second Lebanon War ends.
8 September 2006	Israel lifts its naval blockade of Lebanon.
2010	The Swedish assessment of multilateral organizations is released, where it also reflects on the UNRWA.

2016	The U.S. donated USD 368 million, about a third of the 2016 annual Project Budget.
August 2018	U. S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley confirmed that the U.S. State Department would be ending all contributions to UNRWA, reversing a policy held constant by U.S. administrations for the past 70 years.
14 July 2021	The 2021-2022 Framework for Cooperation is signed with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.
18 December 2021	The EU and the UNRWA signed a joint declaration on the EU's support for the period 2021-2024.
30 June 2023	The mandate of the UNRWA is to be renewed.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UN RESOLUTION 302 (IV)

UNGA resolution 302 (IV) was adopted on the 8th of December 1949 and marks the starting point of the UNRWA. Through operative clause 7: “Establishes the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: (a) To carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programmes as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission; (b) To consult with the interested Near Eastern Governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available;”

Mandate extensions

The mandate of the UNRWA is extended every 3 years, through UNGA resolutions. The last extension of the UNRWA mandate was on the 13th of December 2019, 169 United Nations’ Member States voted in favor of renewing the mandate for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The renewal once again re-affirms the responsibility and commitment of the UN and its member states towards not only UNRWA but more importantly, Palestinian refugees. The renewal of the mandate which has ensued consistently every 3 years since 1949 when the Agency was established, occurred in the midst of a strategic and persistent US-Israeli campaign

not only to delegitimize but also eliminate the UNRWA and with it the issue of Palestinian refugees. The US and Israel were the only member states to vote against the mandate renewal¹⁸.

United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR)

The UNRPR is the predecessor organization of the UNRWA. Through UNGA resolution 302, where the UNRWA was formed, the UNRWA was basically defined as an extension of the UNRPR. However, not much is known about the action of the UNRPR, since it didn't have much time to operate, since it was soon transitioned into the UNRWA. The main barrier of the UNRPR is that its establishment was simultaneous to many historical events, like the Israeli independence and the withdrawal of the British troops.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO was established in 1964 and it embodied the national Palestine movement. It was a broad national front, or an “umbrella organization”, comprised of numerous organizations of the resistance movement, political parties, popular organizations, and independent personalities and figures from all sectors of life. The basic aim of the organization was the liberation of Palestine. On October 14, 1974, the United Nations General Assembly recognised the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”. Two weeks later, on October 28, it was similarly recognised at the Arab League's Rabat Summit as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. On November 15, 1988, the PLO declared Palestinian independence from their base in Algiers, and the following month, also recognised the existence of Israel in its 1967 borders and renounced terrorism. In 1993, Israel recognised the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁹ The fact that the PLO was basically the representative of the Palestinian population, led to the Israeli effort to destroy it during the Lebanon War. Concluding, the mandate of this organization was strictly political and the scope was the improvement of diplomatic relations and assistance during Palestine's post-conflict political turmoil.

¹⁸ “Renewing UNRWA's Mandate Is the First Step in Securing Protection for Palestinian Refugees and Idps.” *BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights*, www.badil.org/press-releases/764.html.

¹⁹ Jazeera, Al. “Plo - Palestineremix.” *PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) - Palestine Remix*, interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/plo.html.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Initiation of political resolutions

Noticing the strictly humanitarian mandate of the organization, maybe a good solution would be to adopt a complementary political character. While not ceasing to provide the needed humanitarian aid and assistance, the organization could help in political resolutions. However, this poses many risks to the organization's integrity and stability. A prime example would be countries hindering and intervening in the work of the UNRWA, due to opposite interests, for example, Israel. This situation reminds a lot of the Israeli attempt to destroy the PLO's strongholds. Consequently, the organization can't follow both paths, political and humanitarian simultaneously. A good solution, in order to avoid this escalation, would be to branch out the organization in two sectors. In that way, in case the UNRWA was found in difficulty to address the political crisis, the humanitarian aspect would not be affected, as the two different branches of the organization would work on radically opposite mandates. In simpler words, if the UNRWA was facing dispute with a country (similarly to the history of PLO), this would only be a barrier to the political branch, but not the humanitarian one. Moreover, even in case the UNRWA is politicized, the organization won't have the jurisdiction to pose any strong and invasive measures, but could provide with a negotiation plan or supervisory mechanisms, as preventative measures to possible conflict.

Increase efficiency of detecting mechanisms

One of the most essential parts of the UNRWA's work is the function of mechanisms that detect and monitor refugees in the Near East. However, mostly stemming from the lack of funding and centralized governance, mechanisms are weakened and thus have decreased efficiency. Moreover, similarly to the assessments, which have been conducted by nations at some points, it is necessary that operations are evaluated and federalized regionally. There are several ways that efficiency could be bolstered, such as increasing sufficiency and spreading such mechanisms in the whole region of operation, funding towards their improvement, assistance by other countries or organizations that use such mechanisms, constant reflections and assessments on their work, trained personnel, promotion of volunteering etc.

Funding

Bearing in mind that the lack of funding is the main issue hindering the function of the organization, it is essential that all carriers that might be applicable for funding the organization are encouraged to contribute. Hence, variable incentives could be used, in order to bolster the financial status of the UNRWA, for example, the encouragement of organizations and UN-member states to contribute financially. What should also be considered is that the way the funding is distributed should be monitored and handled, for instance, monitoring, personnel and

all the variables that the UNRWA must cater for. As a result, UN supervision is necessary, to some extent.

Federalization in the 5 regions

Noting that, to some extent, many regions in the Near East aren't "included" properly in the work of the UNRWA, establishing control centers and the various mechanisms spread out in all 5 operational territories could be a very beneficial move. In that case the detection of refugees, as well as the way they are managed after they are spotted would be improved. Hence, rather than controlling the region in a chaotic manner, due to its geographic extent, managing the region in smaller territories would make it possible for the organization to adjust to special and differentiated needs. Concluding, decentralization would be a key to being more aware of the region, as well as ways to handle every territory separately.

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